

COMMUNITY PLANNING & INVESTMENT PROGRAM

GRANTS FOR FY 2003 – WINTER/SPRING ROUND

INTRODUCTION

The Maine State Planning Office (SPO) is pleased to announce a new round of planning grants for communities and multi-municipal partnerships under its Community Planning and Investment Program (CPIP). SPO cautions that because of the current serious budgetary shortfall, as well as that of the next fiscal year, we are uncertain of the amount of funds that will be awarded in this round. With that warning, however, we feel it prudent to initiate the application process to facilitate awards, pending notification of funding. SPO is offering three competitive grant programs: 1) **Comprehensive Planning Grant Program** for first-time funding assistance; 2) **Comprehensive Plan Update Grant Program** to enable communities to bring their plans and policies up to date to reflect demographic and economic changes, and to promote the development and adoption of emboldened plans that more effectively guide growth through the integration of smart growth principles; and 3) **Implementation Grant Program** to support the preparation of zoning ordinances that implement strategies identified in an adopted comprehensive plan found to be consistent with the Maine Planning and Land Use Regulation Act¹. SPO is also offering for the first time a fourth, non-competitive grant program: 4) **Regional Challenge Grant Program** to support promising regional initiatives designed to establish new mechanisms for managing governmental affairs more efficiently and economically, and integrating transportation, economic development, natural resource protection, and land use management more effectively, consistent with smart growth principles. **Qualified communities are encouraged to apply, with the understanding that grant awards are contingent on the availability of funds.**

Maine Planning and Land Use Regulation Act

The purpose of the Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (30-A M.R.S.A. §4301 et seq.), commonly referred to as the “Growth Management Act”, is to “establish, in each municipality of the State, local comprehensive planning and land use management.” The Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (hereinafter, “the Act”) defines what constitutes a local growth management program. It must include a Comprehensive Plan, as described in 30-A M.R.S.A. §4326 subsections 1 to 4, and an Implementation Program, as described in 30-A M.R.S.A. §4326 subsection 5. Each municipality’s comprehensive plan must include: inventory and analysis, policy development, implementation strategies, and regional coordination. Implementation strategies are specific actions necessary to carry out the policies and goals articulated in the plan, and include the identification and designation of at least two basic types of geographic areas (growth and rural), and the development of a capital investment plan.

Comprehensive planning process requirements and content requirements are intended to guide the development of comprehensive plans and land use ordinances. The *process* requirements are

¹ If a community can demonstrate that it has adequate resources and commits to preparing its zoning ordinance with those resources, the Program would entertain a proposal to use the funds to prepare its subdivision ordinance. In the rare case where the community can demonstrate that it has adequate resources and commits to preparing both its zoning and subdivision ordinance with those resources, the Program would entertain a proposal to implement another strategy in its adopted consistent Comprehensive Plan.

designed to ensure that residents and landowners within a municipality are informed of and invited to participate in setting a future course for their community. The **content** requirements have two core objectives:

- 1) Ensuring that each municipality considers and analyzes a comprehensive inventory of information pertinent to state goals and areas of local and regional significance to aid in the development of policies and strategies to address those goals. The inventory must be based on information provided by the State, regional councils and other relevant sources. The analysis must include 10-year projections of local and regional growth in population; in residential, commercial and industrial activity; the projected need for public facilities; and the vulnerability of, and potential impacts on, natural resources.
- 2) Guaranteeing that critical issues of statewide concern (e.g. affordable housing, historic preservation, water quality) are carefully considered and addressed by each municipality.

Comprehensive plans must be consistent with the list of State Goals and State Coastal Policies (Appendix D) of the Act. The specifics and breadth of the State Goals and State Coastal Policies allow for the incorporation of local values and unique qualities of each municipality and the ability to creatively determine appropriate means to achieve these goals.

Certification of Consistency

A community may request a Certificate of Consistency from the State Planning Office for its Growth Management Program confirming consistency with the Act. The certificate declares the consistency of the comprehensive plan and all implementation measures, including zoning ordinances and other regulatory and non-regulatory measures adopted to implement the plan.

The voluntary Certification of Consistency qualifies the municipality for preferential treatment by state and federal agencies responsible for grant programs and other assistance related to development or preservation efforts.

Smart Growth vs. Sprawl

The three grant programs are designed to help communities address sprawl-related issues and devise smart growth solutions. Smart Growth refers generally to efforts to invest and grow in a wiser, more sustainable manner as an alternative to sprawl with its attendant negative impacts on our fiscal health, environment and community character. For the purposes of these grant programs, smart growth encompasses the following principles:

1. Maintaining Maine's historic settlement pattern of compact villages and urban centers separated by rural countryside and sustaining a unique sense of place in every community by respecting local cultural and natural features;
2. Targeting economic and residential growth to compact, mixed use centers in areas with existing or planned infrastructure and services at a scale appropriate for the community and region;
3. Preserving and creating mixed use, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods that incorporate open areas, landscaping and other amenities that enhance livability;
4. Investing public funds and providing incentives and disincentives consistent with the vision expressed in 1, 2, and 3 above;

5. Providing choice in the mode of transportation and ensuring that transportation options are integrated and consistent with land use objectives;
6. Protecting environmental quality and important natural and historic features of the State and preserving large areas of unfragmented wildlife habitat and undeveloped land;
7. Encouraging and strengthening agriculture, forestry, fishing and other natural resource-based enterprises and minimizing conflicts of development with these industries;
8. Reinvesting in service centers and in downtowns and village areas, and supporting a diversity of viable business enterprises and housing opportunities in these areas;
9. Establishing and maintaining coalitions with stakeholders and engaging the public in the pursuit of smart growth solutions; and
10. For municipalities without significant growth pressures and/or small rural communities without substantial infrastructure, smart growth involves consideration of the above principles to the extent that they are applicable, and ensuring that the development that does occur is accomplished in a manner that enhances community values, avoids incremental negative impacts, and is consistent with a sustainable and fiscally sound growth pattern.

GRANT PROGRAMS

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING GRANTS

Comprehensive Planning Grants are available for municipalities or multi-municipal partnerships that have not previously received a comprehensive planning grant (see Appendix E). **Qualified communities are encouraged to apply, with the understanding that the ability to award grants is contingent on the availability of funds, which will not be known until a later date.** We hope to have approximately \$250,000 for Comprehensive Planning Grants, Comprehensive Plan Update Grants, and Implementation Grants in this round. As the funding source includes anticipated FY 2004 General Fund monies, actual contract finalization and dispersal of some of the anticipated state funds are contingent on legislative appropriation and cannot take place prior to July 1, 2003. **Contracts for grants awarded with FY 2003 General Funds must be executed and returned to SPO by May 28, 2003.**

The actual amount of individual grants is based on a formula that factors in the size of the community, and ranges between \$17,300 and \$33,300. The minimum local match required is 33% of the state grant amount. **The application deadline for the program is April 11, 2003. Awards will be announced by April 28, 2003.**

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE GRANTS

Update Grants support the update of existing comprehensive plans. Eligibility is limited to communities that already received a state planning grant encumbered prior to July 1, 1994 to develop their existing plans. The focus of the program is promoting the development and adoption of emboldened plans that more effectively guide growth through the integration of smart growth principles.

Qualified communities are encouraged to apply, with the understanding that the ability to award grants is contingent on the availability of funds, which will not be known until a later date. We hope to have approximately \$250,000 for Comprehensive Plan Update Grants, Comprehensive Planning Grants, and Implementation Grants in this round. As the funding source

includes anticipated FY 2004 General Fund monies, actual contract finalization and dispersal of some of the anticipated state funds are contingent on legislative appropriation and cannot take place prior to July 1, 2003. **Contracts for grants awarded with FY 2003 General Funds must be executed and returned to SPO by May 28, 2003.**

Individual grants up to \$10,000 would be available. The minimum local match required is **50%** of the state grant amount, or \$5,000. **The application deadline for the program is April 11, 2003. Awards will be announced by April 28, 2003.**

IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

The Implementation Grant Program funds the development of land use ordinances and other measures designed to implement comprehensive plan policies and recommendations. It is available only to municipalities that have adopted a comprehensive plan that the State has found to be consistent with the Maine Planning and Land Use Regulation Act and to those who have not previously received an Implementation Grant.

Qualified communities are encouraged to apply, with the understanding that the ability to award grants is contingent on the availability of funds, which will not be known until a later date. We hope to have approximately \$250,000 for Implementation Grants, Comprehensive Planning Grants, and Comprehensive Plan Update Grants in this round. As the funding source includes anticipated FY 2004 General Fund monies, actual contract finalization and dispersal of some of the anticipated state funds are contingent on legislative appropriation and cannot take place prior to July 1, 2003. **Contracts for grants awarded with FY 2003 General Funds must be executed and returned to SPO by May 28, 2003.**

The actual amount of individual grants is **\$12,000** that requires a minimum local match of at least 33% or **\$3,960**. **The application deadline for the program is April 11, 2003. Awards will be announced by 28, 2003.**

REGIONAL CHALLENGE GRANTS

The Regional Challenge Grant Program provides non-competitive grants to support promising regional initiatives designed to establish new mechanisms for managing governmental affairs more efficiently and economically, and integrating transportation, economic development, natural resource protection, and land use management more effectively, consistent with smart growth principles. SPO is seeking to provide critical interim support for promising initiatives that have germinated to a point where the infusion of modest resources can provide an opportunity for regional stakeholders to fully consider and implement new approaches. Preference will be given to projects that are clearly linked to strategies in comprehensive plans that the Office has found to be consistent with the Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (the Act) and/or that are called for in officially adopted regional policy documents such as Regional Transportation Advisory Committee Regional Advisory Reports, Comprehensive Transportation Study Region Reports and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies. **Qualified applicants are encouraged to apply, with the understanding that the ability to award grants is contingent on the availability of funds.**

We hope to have approximately \$60,000 for Regional Challenge Grants. **These grants are not competitive, nor is there a deadline for receipt of applications.** Up to \$15,000 may be requested. Funds are available as of March 1, 2003. SPO will consider proposals from qualified applicants on an ongoing basis, including into FY04, if funding is available. Applications will be reviewed as they are received until funds are expended.

The applicant and associated project partners must provide a 100% cash match of the amount requested of SPO. For applicants that do not have a 100% match in-hand at the time of application, SPO may consider a proposal for a staged schedule to fulfill the match requirement to allow a reasonable amount of time. In such case, full awards will be contingent on meeting the staged requirements and/or successful delivery of interim products.

See individual grant program statements for more detail on the submission requirements and scoring for each competitive grant application.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The State Planning Office has provided each regional council with funds to assist municipalities in preparing grant applications. Appendix A provides a list of Regional Council contacts. Please visit the FAQ web page that will be posted at <http://www.maine.gov/spo/landuse/docs/grantfaq.pdf> by March 14, 2003. Any necessary clarifications regarding the grant application and award process will be addressed on the FAQ web page. Due to the competitive nature of the grant program, SPO staff cannot respond to requests for assistance or advice regarding individual applications.

LOCAL MATCH & LEVERAGING RESOURCES

One component of grant proposals that SPO gives careful consideration to is the proposed nature of the local match and potential leveraging of additional resources. Not only do these resources supplement state dollars, but they are an indication of local support for the upcoming planning process. This consideration is given particular emphasis in the review of applications for comprehensive plan update grants, as SPO believes that local commitment and support are critical to emboldening these plans and ultimately making them more successful.

The scoring criterion pertaining to matching and leveraging is: “the degree to which the local match demonstrates local financial commitment and clearly augments resources, and to which additional funds and in-kind contributions are leveraged from other sources.”

In applying this criterion, SPO draws a distinction between the minimum local match requirement and leveraging of funds beyond this amount. For the minimum required match, SPO looks closely at the “quality” and nature of the match, and credits communities that commit to raising/spending additional funds and resources for the project, as opposed to assigning time from already funded positions or defraying the cost of expenses already incurred. **Volunteer time, whether from committees or boards working on the plan, or others providing assistance on the plan, will not be credited toward the minimum match requirement, although documented in-kind services are considered as additional leveraging.**

SPO views the additional leveraging of funds above and beyond the minimum match requirement, be it in the form of extra dollars, commitments from existing staffing, other in-kind services, etc., as positioning the planning effort to produce a better product. This is the area in which we recommend

that applicants take full advantage of creative grantsmanship in showing how a grant award will be supported and in turn support other grants, funds and resources.

APPEALS/RESERVATIONS

Any person aggrieved by the award decision may appeal the decision to the Director of the Bureau of General Services in the manner prescribed in 5 M.R.S.A. §1825-E. The appeal must be in writing and filed with the Director of the Bureau of General Services, 9 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0009 within 15 days of the official notification of the award results.

In awarding grants for qualified proposals, SPO reserves the right to exceed the approximate funding levels assigned to each grant program. Conversely, SPO reserves the right not to select proposals that do not meet the minimum score indicated for each program, or to further limit selections based on budgetary constraints.

For all grant awards, SPO reserves the right to conduct minor negotiations regarding the budget and workplan, and to make minor modifications in the final scope of work with the agreement of the applicant.

STATE BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

A final word of caution: Although this grant round factored in cuts in the agency's budget as of the end of January 2003, there is no guarantee that additional cuts will not be forthcoming. Budgetary actions of the new administration and Legislature could potentially impact funding of the grant program for this and future grant rounds. Unfortunately, such uncertainty may factor into a community's decision about whether or not to dedicate the time and effort involved in applying for these funds. It is SPO's sincere hope to offer the grant programs at the anticipated levels. We feel it is prudent to move ahead to offer grants, which provide valuable assistance to ongoing planning efforts, but feel compelled to remind communities, as they consider the time and effort involved in applying for these funds, that there is an element of risk and uncertainty that has not necessarily been a factor in previous grant rounds.